

May 1, 1954.

Dear Friends:

This letter is being sent to the following individuals:

Rev. Gene E. Bartlett, First Baptist Church, Los Angeles
Mrs. Helen Beardsley, Congregationalist, Los Angeles
Rev. Maurice Caldwell, Belvedere Church of God, Los Angeles
Rev. Russell E. Clay, First Methodist Church, Whittier
Mrs. Olivia Davis, Society of Friends, San Diego
Rev. John W. Flucke, Morningside Evan. and Ref. Church, Inglewood
Rev. Wesley P. Ford, Central Christian Church, Pasadena
Rev. Allan A. Hunter, Mt. Hollywood Congregational Church
Rev. Albert E. Jenkins, St. Matthias Episcopal Church, Whittier
Rev. Robert B. McAulay, First Presbyterian Church, Orange
Rev. Galen B. Ogden, First Church of the Brethren, La Verne
Rev. Ray W. Ragsdale, Westwood Methodist Church
Rev. Carl W. Segarhammar, Angelica Lutheran Church, Los Angeles
Rev. Frederick B. Trott, First Methodist Church, Alhambra

My suggestion is that the fifteen of us collaborate on a small book, to be published collectively, under some such title as: THE WILL OF GOD: How Do We Find It and Get Power To Do It? - and that we invite Bishop Gerald Kennedy to write an Introduction for it.

You are invited to meet with as many of the above persons as can attend on Friday, June 4th, from 9 A. M. until we have concluded, not later than 4 P. M., at the Methodist Headquarters Building, 125 East Sunset Boulevard, across from the Union Station, Los Angeles. You are further requested to put down the date of Friday, June 25th, from 9 A. M. to 1 P. M., at the same place, for revision of the written sections, before turning the manuscript over to an editing committee of Ray Ragsdale and Gene Bartlett for preparation for publication.

At the meeting on June 4th we should agree upon an outline for the book and assign sections to various individuals. These draft sections to be mailed to all cooperating members by June 14th, in plenty of time for consideration before the revision meeting on June 25th.

A book of 128 pages in paper covers can retail for one dollar, and allow commissions to bookstores and cover costs of promotion. A bid from a local printer makes it clear that the paper edition can be printed for 15 to 18 cents, depending upon the number printed. My suggestion is that we ask the Methodist Publishing House if they will assume responsibility for publishing the book, and furnish IMPRINT EDITIONS to other denominational publishing houses at approximate cost of printing, in order to give them a margin for promotion. The cloth edition at \$2.00 would make possible a substantial margin for promotion. If we turn the manuscript over to the publisher by July 5th, copies of the paper edition at least can be delivered to the various publishing houses and bookstores by September 6th, thus making the book available for use in the fall months.

In order to save time and provide a basis for discussion, I am enclosing a TENTATIVE outline upon which I have expended much energy. Please study this critically and be prepared for the discussion on June 4th.

Expectantly,

Preliminary outline for discussion, deletion, addition

THE WILL OF GOD

How Do We Find It and Get Power To Do It?

1. Be eager to discover God's plan for your own life

- (a) Our Christlike God is a revealing Father
- (b) He loves us individually, one by one
- (c) He yearns for our companionship
- (d) He needs our help in completing his work
- (e) Respond to the initiative of the Holy Spirit

2. Saturate your mind with the teaching and example of Jesus

- (a) Understand the situation in which he lived
- (b) Reflect upon the alternatives before him
- (c) Continue studying the record of his teaching
- (d) Keep asking: What does Jesus want me to do about this?
- (e) Make resolute your commitment to him

3. Live with a sense of mission

- (a) Deepen the desire to make your life count as God's fellow-worker
- (b) Live simply and purposefully
- (c) Use time wisely

4. Be persistent in prayer

- (a) How to pray
- (b) Private prayer
- (c) Family prayer
- (d) Group prayer
- (e) Worship in the sanctuary

5. Mellow your spirit

- (a) Pay attention to the beauty of God's universe
- (b) Expose yourself often to the spell of great music
- (c) Read great biographies
- (d) Reflect upon great poetry

6. Strive to achieve integrity of character

- (a) Truthfulness
- (b) Honesty
- (c) Purity
- (d) Unselfishness
- (e) Self-giving concern

7. Love God with your mind

- (a) The admonition of Holy Scripture
- (b) The complexity of life
- (c) Test every proposal in every area of life by the will of God as revealed in the way of Christ
- (d) The urgent need of Christian action
- (e) The requirement of adult education on a massive scale

8. Experience fellowship on the highest level

- ~~(a)~~ (a) Partake regularly of Holy Communion
- (b) Pray with others about your responsibility
- (c) Enter into conversation frequently about the great issues of life
- (d) Seek human counsel before making crucial decisions
- (e) Enter into the fellowship of the saints

9. Strengthen your faith in spiritual power

- (a) The affirmations of the Bible
- (b) The moral order of the universe
- (c) The destructive nature of evil
- (d) The creativity of goodness

10. Discipline yourself to run the risks of doing the will of God,
rather than suffer the consequences of doing wrong

- (a) Why was Jesus crucified?
- (b) The plain teaching of Jesus about risks
- (c) The experience of the early church
- (d) The testimony of prophets in every age
- (e) Learn the will of God by walking in the light he
has already given

11. Joyously leave the results in God's hands

- (a) Do your part and trust God
- (b) The wisdom of God
- (c) The love of God
- (d) The power of God

12. Experience eternal life in the midst of time

- (a) The significance of the resurrection of Jesus
- (b) Enjoy fellowship with our living Lord
- (c) The reality of the invisible
- (d) Learn to be at home in the world of the spirit

CASE STUDIES IN FINDING THE WILL OF GOD

32 pages of actual situations in which we and our friends have sought to find the will of God in specific issues. State the problem and ask several pertinent questions, without giving our own opinions as to the proper answer for a Christian.

Preliminary out line for discussion, deletion, addition

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1. Be eager to discover God's plan for your own life

- (a) Our Christlike God is a revealing Father
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- (e) Respond to the initiative of the Holy Spirit

2. Saturate your mind with the teaching and example of Jesus

- (a) Understand the situation in which he lived
- (b) Reflect upon the alternatives before him
- (c) Continue studying the record of his doings
- (d) Keep asking: What ~~must~~ does Jesus want me to do about this?
- (e) *Make more resolute your Commitment to him*

3. Live With a Sense of Mission

- (a) Deepen the ~~desire~~ desire to make your life count as God's fellow-worker
- (b) Live simply and purposefully
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- (a) The admonition of Holy Scripture
- (b) The complexity of modern life
- (c) ~~Test~~ Test every proposal in every area of life by the will of God as revealed in the way of Christ
- (d) The urgent need of Christian action
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8. Experience Fellowship on the Highest Level

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- (a) Why Was Jesus crucified?
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CASE STUDIES IN FINDING THE WILL OF GOD

Questions for discussion of actual situations

April 24, 1954.

Dear Friends:

This letter is being sent to the following persons:

- Gene Bartlett, First Baptist Church, Los Angeles
- Helen Beardsley, Congregationalist
- Russell Clay, First Methodist Church, Whittier
- Olivia Davis, Society of Friends
- Wesley Ford, Central Christian Church, Pasadena
- Allan Hunter, Mt. Hollywood Congregational Church
- Ray Ragsdale, Westwood Methodist Church, Los Angeles
- Fred Trotter, First Methodist Church, Alhambra

My suggestion is that the nine of us, plus a Presbyterian and and Episcopalian to be selected, collaborate on a 96-page pamphlet and publish it collectively, under some such title as: THE WILL OF GOD - How We Find It and Get Power to Do It? If this idea commends itself to you, the group should get together for an all-day examination of the possibilities and for the dividing of responsibility for rough drafts of various sections, to be followed by individual consideration of these draft proposals, and a further all-day conversation. After which an editing committee of three should prepare the manuscript for publication.

If we could do this work with sufficient thoroughness, there would be a great advantage in having the pamphlet off the press by early September. This would mean sending the manuscript to the printer at the end of July.

If we decide to proceed, in the meantime each of us could give serious thought to the type of pamphlet which would be most helpful, and be prepared for the discussion at the first meeting.

You may consider this an impracticable proposal, and I know that you will be frank in expressing your judgment.

Cordially,

Please tear off and mail - after checking each line

	Yes	No
Friday, May 28	_____	_____
Saturday, May 29	_____	_____
Friday, June 4	_____	_____
Saturday, June 5	_____	_____

Suggested Presbyterian

Suggested Episcopalian

April 24, 1954.

Dear Helen and Allan:

The following proposal was discussed on Friday by Russell Clay, Ray Ragsdale, Owen Geer, Clark Robbins, Frank Williams and Gerald Harvey. The idea seems so important that 25 Methodist ministers are spending two Saturdays - May 8 and 15th - in a thorough examination of it. A Disciple group is also spending a day on it. Other groups will probably meet. I suggested to Milton Gabrielson that he get together a group of Congregationalists, but have not had his reply. If you were not under such heavy pressure just now, I would have come over to talk with you about this. Do tell me what you think of it.

Affectionately,

A SPIRITUAL AWAKENING CRUSADE

A group here in Southern California proposes twelve weeks of concentrated effort in the churches of the nation to find the will of God and power to do it, beginning on World Communion Sunday, October 3, 1954, and continuing until Christmas Sunday.

Confusion in the minds of Christian people is a primary cause of the crisis which threatens to annihilate a considerable proportion of mankind.

Long ago our Lord pointed out that when our very lights are dark, the darkness will be deep indeed. If we cannot tell the difference between sweet and bitter, between good and evil, our actions are certain to lead to disaster. Blind leaders are now rushing the blind toward the abyss. And the fault is not chiefly with the leaders of governments, but with the religious instruction, or lack of it, given to the people in these past days.

The members of our churches are confused as to the difference between what is right in God's sight and what he knows to be wrong. They have not been sufficiently instructed in the ways of find the will of God in specific situations, and they have not been properly guided in the search for God's power to enable them to do right.

The decisive task before the churches now is the instruction of their members. This is far more important in the immediate future than campaigns to bring in new members, as indispensable as that endeavor remains. The mind of Christ offers us the only hope of changing our disastrous course. He alone is the Light of the world.

Quickly we must learn to think as he thinks, to feel as he feels, and to follow his way wherever he leads us.

The churches must crowd an entire generation of instruction into these few months just ahead if we are to avoid the destruction of our fellows in the fury of our endeavor to defend ourselves and our values. Massive concentration upon two questions is required: How can we discover what is right in God's sight, and how can we turn on God's power to do it?

Therefore, let the minister gather together in Prayer Retreats on successive weeks, in groups of 20 to 40 at a time, his entire congregation, says on Saturdays from 2 to 9, or on Sundays 2 to 9, for prayer and conversation about the responsibility of being a Christian in this day of confusion, fear and conflict. These Retreats to be led by the minister and several mature members of the congregation.

During these twelve weeks let the minister preach a series of sermons on What is right, and how do we release God's power to do it; let the various agencies of the church concentrate on these two questions, in adult classes, youth classes and fellowships, women's societies, men's clubs, prayer groups; let a special effort be made to enroll individuals in continuing prayer-study groups of five to ten in the church and in homes; let appropriate literature dealing with these two questions be circulated.

Preparation for the crusade to begin immediately and continue until it opens. Let concerned members go two by two to visit every family in the church, interpreting the crusade and enrolling members in the proposed Prayer Retreats. Let the minister use his intervening

sermons in laying foundations for the crusade. Let every agency of the church enter into this preparatory work.

God knows what is right for us in our personal relations and in our corporate affairs. As Meister Eckhart said hundreds of years ago, God is ready and we are unready, God is willing and we are unwilling, God is a thousand times more eager to provide guidance than we are ready to follow wherever he leads us. Our minds and spirits must quickly be made ready. The Holy Spirit is yearning to guide us into all truth. The power of God is sufficient for our salvation. The hour has come for massive concentration upon two questions: What is right, and how do we get power to do it?

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A SPIRITUAL EXPLORATION

An Urgent Endeavor to Gain Insight and Power

After many hours of fellowship in prayer and discussion, the following Methodist ministers have decided to begin a special search on World Communion Sunday, October 3, 1954 - Carl Beharka, Harold Cary, Russell Clay, Owen Geer, Frank Gray, Arthur Harrington, Gerald Harvey, Will Hildebrand, Thatcher Jordan, Frank Matthews, Oscar Newby, Ray Ragsdale, Clark Robbins, George Root, Randall Scott, Norman Taylor, Frank Toothaker, L. L. White, Frank Williams, Edgar Zimmerman, Gil Zimmerman.

The plan is to inaugurate a series of unhurried Prayer Retreats on Sunday afternoon and evening, possibly alternating on Saturday afternoon and evening. The minister will meet successively with groups of ten to forty of his members for six or seven hours of prayer and discussion of two supremely important questions: HOW CAN WE FIND THE WILL OF GOD? HOW CAN WE GET POWER TO DO IT?

This will be a search primarily not for answers to specific questions but for WAYS of discovering what is right in God's sight in every relationship, and for POWER to live as God yearns for us to live. It is expected that during the weeks of these Prayer Retreats the minister will preach a series of sermons on these vital questions. In some cases the Retreats will be prepared for by visitation two by two to the home of members, interpreting the purpose of the Exploration and enrolling individuals for the Retreats. Experiments will be made in enlisting youth groups, adult classes, women's societies, men's clubs and other agencies of the local church in the search. Various ways will be used in assembling the Prayer Retreats: some ministers will begin with church boards divided into small groups on successive Sundays or Saturdays, some will bring together natural age groups, some will endeavor to expose the entire church membership to the experience of an extended Prayer Retreat.

Ministers participating in the Spiritual Exploration are to meet with Russell Clay in Whittier on October 29th, from 2 to 5, to exchange experiences and plan for the future of the Exploration.

It is hoped and expected that the Spiritual Exploration will bring new spiritual vitality into the life of the church, increase the number and zest of continuing prayer-study groups, and establish the unhurried Prayer Retreat as a permanent part of the work of the church.

Other Methodists and ministers of other religious bodies are urged to experiment with various methods of making use of all-day fellowships of prayer and searching. A special book for this Spiritual Exploration is being prepared by an interdenominational group and will be ready for use in October. Send orders well in advance to your religious publishing house for copies of the inexpensive little book: THE WILL OF GOD: How Do We Find It and Get Power To Do It?

The Spiritual Exploration grows out of an awareness of the urgent and desperate need of Christians these days to be able to find out what is right and to gain power to do it - in the home, in other personal relations, in economic life, in race relations, in politics and world affairs. A serious effort is being made to find more efficacious ways of living creatively and abundantly in an age of confusion, suspicion, fear and conflict.

**Bishop Kennedy
will write
an Introduction**

THE CHRISTIAN CITIZEN

CO-WORKER WITH GOD
IN BUILDING THE GOOD SOCIETY

BY
(IF THEY AGREE)

GENE E. BARTLETT
RUSSELL E. CLAY
JOHN W. FLUCKE
WESLEY P. FORD
MILTON A. GABRIELSON
OWEN M. GEER
ALLAN A. HUNTER

ALBERT E. JENKINS
ROBERT B. MCAULAY
GALEN B. OGDEN
KIRBY PAGE
RAY W. RAGSDALE
O. E. SHAFER
CARL W. SEGARHAMMAR
ROBERT S. VOGEL

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5. THE CHRISTIAN CITIZEN AND RACE RELATIONS
6. THE CHRISTIAN CITIZEN AND OFFENDERS
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11. THE CHRISTIAN CITIZEN AND CIVIL LIBERTIES
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CHAPTER I

CHRISTIAN FOUNDATIONS OF CITIZENSHIP

EVERY INDIVIDUAL ON THIS EARTH IS PRECIOUS IN THE SIGHT OF GOD AND IS ESSENTIAL TO THE COMPLETION OF THE DIVINE PURPOSE. LONG AGO ST. AUGUSTINE PRAYED: "O GOD, THOU HAST MADE US FOR THYSELF, AND WE CAN NEVER REST UNTIL WE REST IN THEE." WE NEED GOD URGENTLY AND EVEN DESPERATELY. BUT THE OTHER SIDE OF ST. AUGUSTINE'S PRAYER IS THE TRUTH THAT GOD CAN NEVER REST UNTIL HE WINS OUR COMPANIONSHIP AND COOPERATION IN FULFILLING HIS HOLY PURPOSE. URGENTLY HE NEEDS US.

GOD IS LOVE. HE IS OUR HEAVENLY FATHER AND CAN NEVER BE FULLY HIMSELF IN ISOLATION. A PARENT LONGS FOR COMPANIONSHIP AND REQUIRES HELP IN BUILDING A JOYOUS HOME. LONELINESS COMES WHEN LOVE IS IGNORED OR REJECTED. IT IS SOBERING TO REFLECT UPON THE NUMBER OF GOD'S CHILDREN AROUND THIS WIDE EARTH WHO PAY NO ATTENTION TO HIM AND NEVER TURN TO HIM EAGERLY IN REVERENCE AND GRATITUDE. ADDITIONAL MILLIONS OF US DO MAKE AN EFFORT TO PLEASE HIM, BUT BRING GRIEF TO HIS HEART BY OUR LUKEWARMNESS AND TIMES OF FORGETFULNESS AND REBELLION AGAINST HIS LOVING WILL.

IN THE BOOK OF ROMANS WE READ OF THE LONELINESS AND GRIEF OF GOD. REFLECT UPON THESE WORDS: "WE KNOW THAT THE WHOLE CREATION HAS BEEN GROANING IN TRAVAIL UNTIL NOW...LIKEWISE THE SPIRIT HELPS US IN OUR WEAKNESS; FOR WE DO NOT KNOW HOW TO PRAY AS WE OUGHT, BUT THE SPIRIT HIMSELF INTERCEDES FOR US WITH SIGHS TOO DEEP FOR WORDS."

LONG AGO HOSEA UNDERSTOOD GOD TO SAY:

WHEN ISRAEL WAS A CHILD, I LOVED HIM,
AND OUT OF EGYPT I CALLED MY SON.
THE MORE I CALLED THEM,
THE MORE THEY WENT FROM ME;
THEY KEPT SACRIFICING TO THE BAALS,
AND BURNING INCENSE TO IDOLS.
YET IT WAS I WHO TAUGHT EPHRAIM TO WALK,
I TOOK THEM UP IN MY ARMS;
BUT THEY DID NOT KNOW THAT I HEALED THEM.
I LED THEM WITH CORDS OF COMPASSION,
WITH BANDS OF LOVE,
AND I BECAME TO THEM AS ONE
WHO EASES THE YOKE ON THEIR JAWS
AND I BENT DOWN TO THEM AND FED THEM...
HOW CAN I GIVE YOU UP, O EPHRAIM!
HOW CAN I HAND YOU OVER, O ISRAEL!

GOD NEEDS MORE THAN COMPANIONSHIP, HE REQUIRES HELP. IN HIS INFINITE WISDOM, HE HAS PLACED RESPONSIBILITY UPON HIS CHILDREN AND DEPENDS UPON THEIR COOPERATION. LOVE IN ITS NATURE IS MUTUAL. A FATHER ALONE CANNOT BUILD A JOYOUS HOME. HE MUST DO HIS PART AND OTHER MEMBERS OF THE HOUSEHOLD MUST DO THEIR PART. SEE THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS TRUTH AS YOU REFLECT UPON A HUNGRY BABY. GOD KNOWS

ABOUT THE HUNGER, HE LOVES THE CHILD WITH ALL HIS INFINITE AFFECTION, GOD WANTS HIM TO BE STRONG AND ROBUST, GOD IS DOING EVERYTHING HE CAN DO FOR THE INFANT BUT HE NEEDS HUMAN HELP. IF HE RECEIVES THE RIGHT KIND OF COOPERATION AT THE RIGHT TIME, THE BABY WILL BE WELL FED AND AMPLY NOURISHED. IF THIS HUMAN HELP IS NOT FORTHCOMING, THE CHILD WILL DIE OF HUNGER IN SPITE OF EVERYTHING GOD IS DOING. AND THE TRAGIC TRUTH IS THAT MILLIONS OF BABIES HAVE IN OUR LIFETIME DIED OF STARVATION BECAUSE GOD DID NOT RECEIVE SUFFICIENT HELP.

CONSIDER ALSO THE EDUCATION OF A BABY. IF GOD ALONE AND UNAIDED HAD TO TEACH THE INFANT TO SPEAK AND WRITE, HE WOULD BE REQUIRED IN EACH CASE TO HELP THE BABY DEVISE AN ALPHABET, FORM WORDS, PARAGRAPHS AND SENTENCES, AND TO BEGIN WHERE HE STARTED WITH PRIMITIVE MAN. A CHILD DEVELOPS MENTALLY WHEN GOD RECEIVES THE RIGHT KIND OF HELP IN HIS TRAINING. SO IT IS WITH PRAYER. HUMAN ASSISTANCE IS REQUIRED IF THE CHILD IS TO DEVELOP IN WISDOM AND STATURE AND IN FAVOR WITH GOD AND MEN.

ALL LIFE IS PARTNERSHIP. GOD CAN BE DEPENDED UPON TO DO HIS PART. HE IS SO WISE THAT EVEN HIS "FOOLISHNESS" IS BEYOND THE WISDOM OF MEN. HE IS SO POWERFUL THAT EVEN HIS "WEAKNESS" IS MIGHTIER THAN ANY STRENGTH OF MEN. AND HE IS AS GOOD AS GOODNESS CAN BE IMAGINED. ALL THIS WE MEAN WHEN WE SAY THAT OUR GOD IS CHRISTLIKE. BUT THE BIBLE TELLS US PLAINLY THAT OUR HELP IS NEEDED IN BUILDING THE DIVINE SOCIETY. REFLECT UPON THESE VERSES: "FOR WE ARE FELLOW WORKMEN FOR GOD; YOU ARE GOD'S FIELD, GOD'S BUILDING. ACCORDING TO THE COMMISSION OF GOD GIVEN TO ME, LIKE A SKILLED MASTER-BUILDER I LAID A FOUNDATION, AND ANOTHER MAN IS BUILDING UPON IT. LET EACH MAN TAKE CARE HOW HE BUILDS UPON IT. FOR NO OTHER FOUNDATION CAN ANY ONE LAY THAN THAT WHICH IS LAID, WHICH IS JESUS CHRIST." "SO THEN YOU ARE NO LONGER STRANGERS AND SOJOURNERS, BUT YOU ARE FELLOW CITIZENS WITH THE SAINTS AND MEMBERS OF THE HOUSEHOLD OF GOD, BUILT UPON THE FOUNDATION OF THE APOSTLES AND PROPHETS, CHRIST JESUS HIMSELF BEING THE CHIEF CORNERSTONE, IN WHOM THE WHOLE STRUCTURE IS JOINED TOGETHER AND GROWS INTO A HOLY TEMPLE IN THE LORD; IN WHOM YOU ALSO ARE BUILT INTO IT FOR A DWELLING OF GOD IN THE SPIRIT." "IF YOU ABIDE IN ME, AND MY WORDS ABIDE IN YOU, ASK WHATEVER YOU WILL, AND IT SHALL BE DONE FOR YOU. BY THIS MY FATHER IS GLORIFIED, THAT YOU BEAR MUCH FRUIT, AND SO PROVE TO BE MY DISCIPLES." "TRULY, TRULY, I SAY TO YOU, HE WHO BELIEVES IN ME WILL ALSO DO THE WORKS THAT I DO; AND GREATER WORKS THAN THESE WILL HE DO, BECAUSE I GO TO THE FATHER." "LET YOUR LIGHT SO SHINE BEFORE MEN, THAT THEY MAY SEE YOUR GOOD WORKS AND GIVE GLORY TO YOUR FATHER WHO IS IN HEAVEN."

TRULY ALL LIFE IS A PARTNERSHIP. NO MAN LIVETH TO HIMSELF, AND NO MAN DIETH TO HIMSELF.

WE ARE BOUND WITH INDISSOLUBLE TIES. GOD IS OUR FATHER AND ALL MEN EVERYWHERE ARE OUR KINSMEN. IN LITERAL TRUTH WE ARE OUR BROTHER'S KEEPER. WE ARE ENDOWED WITH ALL THE FACULTIES NEEDED TO LIVE AS GOOD MEMBERS OF GOD'S HOME. WE ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR ONE ANOTHER. OUR LORD REMINDED HIS DISCIPLES THAT SELF-CENTEREDNESS IS DEATH AND THAT LIFE IS FOUND IN SHARING WITH OTHERS IN UTMOST MEASURE. IT IS MORE BLESSED TO GIVE THAN TO RECEIVE BECAUSE OF THE WAY WE ARE MADE. JOY COMES FROM AFFECTION AND FELLOWSHIP.

OUR LORD TAUGHT HIS DISCIPLES TO PRAY FOR THE COMING OF GOD'S KINGDOM ON EARTH. HUMAN SOCIETY IS INTENDED TO BE A LITTLE COLONY OF HEAVEN. IT IS THE WILL OF GOD THAT IT SHOULD BE SAID ABOUT US AS IT WAS OF THE EARLY CHURCH, BEHOLD HOW THESE CHRISTIANS LOVE ONE ANOTHER. "BELOVED, LET US LOVE ONE ANOTHER; FOR LOVE IS OF GOD, AND HE WHO LOVES IS BORN OF GOD AND KNOWS GOD...BELOVED, IF GOD SO LOVED US, WE ALSO OUGHT TO LOVE ONE ANOTHER. NO MAN HAS EVER SEEN GOD; IF WE LOVE ONE ANOTHER, GOD ABIDES IN US AND HIS LOVE IS PERFECTED IN US." "FOR THE WHOLE LAW IS FULFILLED IN ONE WORD, "YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF. BUT IF YOU BITE AND DEVOUR ONE ANOTHER TAKE HEED THAT YOU ARE NOT CONSUMED BY ONE ANOTHER...THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT IS LOVE, JOY, PEACE, PATIENCE, KINDNESS, GOODNESS, FAITHFULNESS, GENTLENESS, SELF-CONTROL; AGAINST SUCH THERE IS NO LAW. AND THOSE WHO BELONG TO CHRIST JESUS HAVE CRUCIFIED THE FLESH WITH ITS PASSIONS AND DESIRES. IF WE LIVE BY THE SPIRIT, LET US ALSO WALK BY THE SPIRIT...AND LET US NOT GROW WEARY IN WELL-DOING, FOR IN DUE SEASON WE SHALL REAP, IF WE DO NOT LOSE HEART. SO THEN, AS WE HAVE OPPORTUNITY, LET US DO GOOD TO ALL MEN, ESPECIALLY TO THOSE WHO ARE OF THE HOUSEHOLD OF FAITH."

SEE THIS SENSE OF RESPONSIBILITY REVEALED IN THE LIFE OF A MISSIONARY. HE IS PROMPTED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT TO BE CONCERNED OVER THE SALVATION AND WELL BEING OF THE PEOPLE OF A FAR OFF LAND. HE COMMITS HIMSELF TO THE DIVINE WILL AND FEELS CALLED TO BE GOD'S MESSENGER TO THAT PEOPLE. HE CONSECRATES HIMSELF, TRAINS HIMSELF AND GIVES HIMSELF TO THEIR REDEMPTION. THE TRUE MISSIONARY IS LESS CONCERNED ABOUT HIS OWN COMFORT AND SAFETY THAN HE IS WITH THE WINNING OF MEN AND WOMEN, BOYS AND GIRLS, TO THE LORD JESUS AND TO A LIFE OF COMRADESHIP WITH THE LIVING GOD. HIS HIGHEST EXALTATIONS DO NOT COME FROM MATERIAL THINGS, BUT FROM SHARING HIMSELF TO THE UTMOST AND FROM THE LOVE AND COMPANIONSHIP OF HIS FELLOWS.

LISTEN TO THIS TESTIMONY FROM ALBERT SCHWEITZER, ONE OF THE GREATEST OF MISSIONARIES:
"I COULD NOT BUT FEEL WITH A SYMPATHY FULL OF REGRET ALL THE PAIN THAT I SAW AROUND ME, NOT ONLY THAT OF MEN BUT THAT OF THE WHOLE CREATION. FROM THIS COMMUNITY OF SUFFERING I HAVE NEVER TRIED TO WITHDRAW MYSELF. IT SEEMED TO ME A MATTER OF COURSE THAT WE SHOULD ALL TAKE OUR SHARE OF THE BURDEN

OF PAIN WHICH LIES UPON THE WORLD...IN MY OWN LIFE ANXIETY, TROUBLE, AND SORROW HAVE BEEN ALLOTTED TO ME AT TIMES IN SUCH ABUNDANT MEASURE THAT HAD MY NERVES NOT BEEN STRONG, I MUST HAVE BROKEN DOWN UNDER THE WEIGHT...BUT I HAVE HAD BLESSINGS TOO: THAT I AM ALLOWED TO WORK IN THE SERVICE OF MERCY; THAT MY WORK HAS BEEN SUCCESSFUL; THAT I RECEIVE FROM OTHER PEOPLE AFFECTION AND KINDNESS IN ABUNDANCE; THAT I HAVE LOYAL HELPERS, WHO IDENTIFY THEMSELVES WITH MY ACTIVITY; THAT I ENJOY A HEALTH WHICH ALLOWS ME TO UNDERTAKE MOST EXHAUSTING WORK; THAT I HAVE A WELL-BALANCED TEMPERAMENT WHICH VARIES LITTLE, AND AN ENERGY WHICH EXERTS ITSELF WITH CALMNESS AND DELIBERATION; AND, FINALLY, THAT I CAN RECOGNIZE AS SUCH WHATEVER HAPPINESS FALLS TO MY LOT, ACCEPTING IT ALSO AS A THING FOR WHICH SOME THANK-OFFERING IS DUE FROM ME."

THAT IS THE WAY EVERY CHRISTIAN IS SUPPOSED TO LIVE, AS A GOOD MEMBER OF GOD'S HOME, WITH A SENSE OF RESPONSIBILITY, AND WITH ONE'S CUP RUNNING OVER WITH THE JOYS OF SHARING IN THE HOLY ENDEAVOR TO CREATE THE BELOVED COMMUNITY.

May 18, 1954

Dear Friends:

This letter is being sent to the following individuals:

Gene E. Bartlett	Albert E. Jenkins
Russell E. Clay	Robert B. McAulay
John W. Flucke	Galen B. Ogden
Wesley P. Ford	Ray W. Ragsdale
Milton A. Gabrielson	O. E. Shafer
Owen M. Geer	Carl W. Segarhammar
Allan A. Hunter	Robert S. Vogel

The proposal for the Spiritual Exploration is being received with enthusiasm. On the enclosed sheet you will find the response of a group of Methodists. The number of participating Methodist ministers will be greatly increased. On Friday a group of Disciple ministers is spending the day on our hilltop in prayer and consideration of the Spiritual Exploration. An impressive number of their ministers will also participate.

When various denominational lists of ministers who are planning to participate are assembled, we will send the combined lists of various religious bodies in Southern California to The Christian Century and to other religious journals in the hope that the editors will consider the Spiritual Exploration sufficiently important to write editorials in support of it.

All the persons listed above, except Allan Hunter who is now in the Middle West, have agreed to work on the proposed book, THE WILL OF GOD. Before the meeting on June 4th, please give serious consideration to the tentative outline submitted.

Bishop Kennedy has agreed to write an Introduction, and Ray Ragsdale assures me that if the Methodist Publishing House is not in a position to publish the book quickly, there is a probability that the Methodist Board of Evangelism would be willing to issue it in a 35-cent edition in time for use in the Spiritual Exploration.

Let me now suggest a second group project, collaboration on another small book, with some such title as THE CHRISTIAN CITIZEN: Co-Worker With God in Building a Good Society. In this case I am prepared, because of heavy pressure upon various members, to do much of the writing and submit rough drafts for rigorous criticism, and revision at an all-day session, before publication with our various names as collaborators. It seems to me highly important to have a group mind determine the contents of such a volume. It can probably be printed in a 35-cent edition. Please tell me which of these dates are possible for an all-day session and I will send you word as to which day is preferable to the groups: Tuesday, July 6; Friday the 9th; the 13th; the 16th. It will be helpful if you will send me word PROMPTLY, so that we can enter the selected date in our datebooks. If you cannot come on any of these days, I will be glad to consult with you at a mutually convenient time.

Both of these little books will probably have a wide circulation throughout the various churches of the nation, and I earnestly hope that you will be able to criticize the different chapters, participate in the day's discussion, and do as much writing as is practicable.

Let us continue in fervent prayer for guidance as we proceed.

Cordially,

THE WILL OF GOD

How Do We Find It and Get Power To Do It?

1. Be eager to discover God's plan for your own life

- (a) Our Christlike God is a revealing Father
- (b) He loves us individually, one by one
- (c) He yearns for our companionship
- (d) He needs our help in completing his work
- (e) Respond to the initiative of the Holy Spirit

2. Saturate your mind with the teaching and example of Jesus

- (a) Understand the situation in which he lived
- (b) Reflect upon the alternatives before him
- (c) Continue studying the record of his teaching
- (d) Keep asking: What does Jesus want me to do about this?
- (e) Make resolute your commitment to him

3. Live with a sense of mission

- (a) Deepen the desire to make your life count as God's fellow-worker
- (b) Live simply and purposefully
- (c) Use time wisely

4. Be persistent in prayer

- (a) How to pray
- (b) Private prayer
- (c) Family prayer
- (d) Worship in the sanctuary

5. Mellow your spirit

- (a) Pay attention to the beauty of God's universe
- (b) Expose yourself often to the spell of great music
- (c) Read great biographies
- (d) Reflect upon great poetry

6. Strive to achieve integrity of character

- (a) Truthfulness
- (b) Honesty
- (c) Purity
- (d) Unselfishness
- (e) Self-giving concern

7. Love God with your mind

- (a) The admonition of Holy Scripture
- (b) The complexity of life
- (c) Test every proposal in every area of life by the will of God as revealed in the way of Christ
- (d) The urgent need of Christian action
- (e) The requirement of adult education on a massive scale

8. Experience fellowship on the highest level

- (a) Partake regularly of Holy Communion
- (b) Pray with others about your responsibilities
- (c) Enter into conversation frequently about the great issues of life
- (d) Seek human counsel before making crucial decisions
- (e) Enter into the fellowship of the saints

9. Strengthen your faith in spiritual power

- (a) The affirmations of the Bible
- (b) The moral order of the universe
- (c) The destructive nature of evil
- (d) The creativity of goodness

10. Discipline yourself to run the risks of doing the will of God, rather than suffer the consequences of doing wrong

- (a) Why was Jesus crucified?
- (b) The plain teaching of Jesus about risks
- (c) The experience of the early church
- (d) The testimony of prophets in every age
- (e) Learn the will of God by walking in the light he has already given

11. Joyously leave the results in God's hands

- (a) Do your part and trust God
- (b) The wisdom of God
- (c) The love of God
- (d) The power of God

12. Experience eternal life in the midst of time

- (a) The significance of the resurrection of Jesus
- (b) Enjoy fellowship with our living Lord
- (c) The reality of the invisible
- (d) Learn to be at home in the world of the spirit

CASE STUDIES IN FINDING THE WILL OF GOD

32 pages of actual situations in which we and our friends have sought to find the will of God in specific instances. State the problem and ask several pertinent questions, without giving our own opinions as to the proper answer for a Christian.

May 1, 1964.

Dear Friends:

This letter is being sent to the following individuals:

Rev. Gene E. Bartlett, First Baptist Church, Los Angeles
Mrs. Helen Beardsley, Congregationalist, Los Angeles
Rev. Maurice Caldwell, Belvedere Church of God, Los Angeles
Rev. Russell E. Clay, First Methodist Church, Whittier
Mrs. Olivia Davis, Society of Friends, San Diego
Rev. John W. Flucke, Morningside Evan. and Reformed Church, L. A.
Rev. Wesley P. Ford, Central Christian Church, Pasadena
Rev. Allan A. Hunter, Mt. Hollywood Congregational Church
Rev. Albert E. Jenkins, St. Matthias Episcopal Church, Whittier
Rev. Robert B. McAulay, First Presbyterian Church, Orange
Rev. Galen B. Ogden, First Church of the Brethren, La Verne
Rev. Ray W. Ragsdale, Westwood Methodist Church
Rev. Carl W. Segarhammar, Angelica Lutheran Church, Los Angeles
Rev. Frederick B. Trotter, First Methodist Church, Alhambra

My suggestion is that the fifteen of us collaborate on a small book, to be published collectively, under some such title as: THE WILL OF GOD: How Do We Find it and Get Power To Do It? - and that we invite Bishop Gerald B. Kennedy to write an introduction for it.

You are invited to meet with as many of the above persons as can attend on Friday, June 4th, from 9 A. M. until we have concluded, not later than 4 P. M., at the Methodist Headquarters Building, 125 East Sunset Boulevard, across from the Union Station, Los Angeles. You are further requested to put down the date Friday, June 25th, from 9 A. M. to 1 P. M., at the same place, for revision of the written sections, before turning the manuscript over to an editing committee of Ray Ragsdale and Gene Bartlett for preparation for publication.

At the meeting on June 4th we should agree upon an outline for the book and assign sections to various individuals. These draft sections to be mailed to all cooperating members by June 14th, in plenty of time for consideration before the revision meeting on June 25th.

A book of 128 pages in paper covers can retail for one dollar, and allow commissions to bookstores and cover costs of promotion. A bid from a local printer makes it clear that the paper edition can be printed for 15 to 18 cents, depending upon the number printed. My suggestion is that we ask the Methodist Publishing House if they will assume responsibility for publishing the book, and furnish IMPRINT EDITIONS to other denominational publishing houses at approximately the cost of printing, in order to give them a margin for promotion. The cloth edition at \$2.00 would make possible a substantial margin for promotion. If we turn the manuscript over to the publisher by July 5th, copies of the paper edition at least can be delivered to the various publishing houses and bookstores by September 6th, thus making the book available for use in the fall months.

In order to save time and provide a basis for discussion, I am enclosing a TENTATIVE outline upon which I have expended much energy. Please study this critically and be prepared for the discussion on June 4th.

Expectantly,

Kirby

A SPIRITUAL AWAKENING CRUSADE

A group here in Southern California proposes twelve weeks of concentrated effort in the churches of the nation to find the will of God and power to do it, beginning on World Communion Sunday, October 3, 1954, and continuing until Christmas Sunday.

Confusion in the minds of Christian people is a primary cause of the crisis which threatens to annihilate a considerable proportion of mankind.

Long ago our Lord pointed out that when our very lights are dark, the darkness will be deep indeed. If we cannot tell the difference between sweet and bitter, between good and evil, our actions are certain to lead to disaster. Blind leaders are now rushing the blind toward the abyss. And the fault is not chiefly with the leaders of governments, but with the religious instruction, or lack of it, given to the people in these past days.

The members of our churches are confused as to the difference between what is right in God's sight and what he knows to be wrong. They have not been sufficiently instructed in the ways of find the will of God in specific situations, and they have not been properly guided in the search for God's power to enable them to do right.

The decisive task before the churches now is the instruction of their members. This is farm more important in the immediate future than campaigns to bring in new members, as indispensable as that endeavor remains. The mind of Christ offers us the only hope of changing our disastrous course. He alone is the Light of the world. Quickly we must learn to think as he thinks, to feel as he feels, and to follow his way wherever he leads us. Massive concentration upon

two questions is required: How can we discover what is right in God's sight, and how can we turn on God's power to do it?

Therefore, let the minister gather together in Prayer Retreats on successive weeks, in groups of 20 to 40 at a time, his entire congregation, say on Saturdays 2 to 9, or on Sundays 2 to 9, for prayer and conversation about the responsibility of being a Christian in this day of confusion, fear and conflict. These Retreats to be led by the minister and several mature members of the congregation.

During these twelve weeks let the minister preach a series of sermons on What is right, and how do we release God's power to do it; let the various agencies of the church concentrate on these two questions, in adult classes, youth classes and fellowships, women's societies, men's clubs, prayer groups; let a special effort be made to enroll individual in continuing prayer-study groups of five to ten in the church and in homes; let appropriate literature dealing with these two questions be circulated.

Preparation for the crusade to begin immediately and continue until it opens. Let concerned members go two by two to visit every family in the church, interpreting the crusade and enrolling members in the proposed Prayer Retreats. Let the minister use his intervening sermons in laying foundations for the crusade. Let every agency of the church enter into this preparatory work.

God knows what is right for us in our personal relations and in our corporate affairs. As Meister Eckhart said hundreds of year ago, God is ready and we are unready, God is willing and we are unwilling.

God is a thousand times more eager to provide guidance than we are ready to follow wherever he leads us. Our minds and spirits must quickly be made ready. The Holy Spirit is yearning to guide us into all truth. The power of God is sufficient for our salvation. The hour has come for massive concentration upon two questions: What is right, and how do we get power to do it?

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- (d) He needs our help in completing his work
- (c) Respond to the initiative of the Holy Spirit

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- (c) Continue studying the record of his teaching
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- (a) Why was Jesus crucified?
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- (c) The experience of the early church
- (d) The testimony of prophets in every age
- (e) Learn the will of God by walking in the light he
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THE WILL OF GOD

How Do We Find It and Get Power To Do It?

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2. Be eager to Discover God's plan for your own life.
3. Saturate your mind with the Teaching and example of Jesus.
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6. Remove barriers to God's resources.
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8. Live beyond your failures.
9. Nurture your faith in spiritual power.
10. Discipline yourself to ~~run the risks of~~ *experience the joy of* doing the will of God, rather than suffer the consequences of doing wrong.
11. Joyously leave the results in God's hands.
12. Experience eternal life in the midst of time.
13. Some actual situations revealing perplexity and lack of power, with signposts pointing toward deliverance.

Chapter 1

THE CRISIS WE FACE

This generation is living through one crisis after another. We have been plunged into two world wars, many other armed conflicts, and worldwide economic distress. The conscripts of many lands have been dragged from their families and subjected to much anguish and peril. Cities have been demolished and multitudes made homeless. Tens of millions of refugees and expellees have endured years of extreme privation and acute suffering. Children in uncounted multitudes have died of starvation.

Men in our time have known the degradation of unemployment, and have been haunted by a sense of insecurity. Fathers have experienced the agony of being unable to provide for their own household. In prosperous years, competition of producer against producer, seller against seller, giant corporations against small concerns, workers against employers, white men against colored people, have produced unequaled intensity of stress and strain. Nervous diseases and heart trouble are taking an appalling toll. Many individuals simply cannot endure it, crack under the pressure and are sent to mental institutions.

The terrible reality of communist aggression, the extreme intransigence of its leaders around the conference table, and the power of its armed forces, have created resentment, fear and hostility in the minds of our people. Propaganda is fanning the flames on both sides around the earth. Passion is being substituted for thinking. Truth is being obscured by distortion and falsehood. The distinction between right and wrong is being blurred. The age-old idea that necessity knows no law and that the end justifies the means is becoming triumphant. Evil is being called good, and good is being denounced as subversive. The race of atomic and hydrogen preparedness for war is nearing the stage of insanity. The confidence of many rests upon the power of massive retaliation. The peoples of the earth are at the mercy of diabolical power concentrated in the hands of leaders of governments.

The spread of the totalitarian spirit, the worship of the state, the degradation of political life, the growth of anti-intellectualism, the demand for conformity, the persecution of dissent, have produced timidity and reluctance to advocate unpopular ideas and to take a stand against prevailing practices. Teachers and professors in large numbers are being intimidated

into silence and inaction concerning controversial issues. Ministers do not want to divide their congregations and jeopardize their effectiveness, and many are convinced that it is better to avoid discussion of economic, political and other social questions. Limited indeed is the volume and quality of ethical instruction about group relations being given to this generation. At a time when the magnitude and complexity of problems clamoring for solution confront us with the need for clear thinking, sound judgment and resolute action, we are consuming much of our energy in denunciation and strife.

The family is surrounded by many enemies of the good life. The sense of economic insecurity, the wide prevalence of intoxication, looseness in sex relations, the craving for excitement, the gulf between the older and the younger generation, confusion as to what is right and wrong - all this and much more is devastating millions of homes.

At the moment when church membership is increasing in volume and in proportion to the population, secularism is pervasive. In business and in politics, many people simply do not take God into account as they make crucial decisions. Many devout believers endeavor only feebly to find and do the will of God in race relations, in dealing with offenders, in international affairs, in economic life. Even earnest seekers frequently find themselves bewildered as to what is right and what is wrong, and often discover that they lack the faith and the power to follow their highest ideals. The most mature spirits sometimes are plunged into the experience known to the saints as "the dark night of the soul."

It is little wonder then that cynicism and pessimism are so widely prevalent. Many doubt that God has a purpose and a will for individuals. Indeed, many believers do not envisage God as the supreme Being who thinks and feels, decides and acts, but rather as impersonal energy incapable of concern for persons. Others hold the conviction that even if God has a purpose for our daily lives, there is no way to discover it or to know it with assurance. They point to the contradictory convictions of equally intelligent and consecrated individuals as to what the will of God really is. And they know persons who do much evil and call their actions the will of God.

Over against these men who are doubtful about our being able to know the will of God, are those individuals who assert dogmatically that they have found it and are complacent about their own lives. Fatalism also is encountered on

every hand, men and women who are resigned to whatever happens and say that they can do nothing about it, a spirit which is akin to the attitude of soldiers who asserted confidently that they would not be killed unless a bullet came along with their number on it.

And finally we must soberly consider the audacity of the claim that a wise and loving God has a personal concern for every individual, has a purpose for his life, offers him resources of wisdom and faith and courage, and pursues him like the hound of heaven down the ways until he is won to a life of communion and fellowship. How incredible to the natural mind is the possibility that mortal man can adore, love and obey an invisible Being of inscrutable wisdom, boundless love, and illimitable power! What a leap of faith is required for the conviction that earthly society can become a little colony of heaven!

Three attitudes are possible for us as we face the universe and examine ourselves. We may call ourselves atheists or agnostics and deny the existence of God or maintain that we cannot know even if there is a God. We may take the position that God is impersonal wisdom and power and does not possess the attributes of love and forgiveness. We may live by the conviction that God is Christlike, and that our deliverance must come from the initiative which he takes and the resources which he makes available for our use. Good and intelligent men differ in conviction and are found with all three of these attitudes. So profound are the problems confronting us, so limited is our understanding, so sinful are our lives, that we ought to move forward with contrition of heart, humility of spirit, and resoluteness of determination.

Yes, we are confronted on every hand with crisis. We are at the mercy of forces over which we have limited individual control. Magnitude, complexity and mystery engulf us. Our problem is how to gain wisdom, nurture self-giving concern, and make use of resources of power. In an effort to drive home the seriousness of our plight, let us reflect upon some actual situations which are frequently encountered.

(list actual situations)

Chapter 2

Be Eager to Know God's Plan for Your Own Life

It is sensible to begin with an examination of the faith that God is Christlike in character. By this is meant: God is the supreme Being - not an inanimate object, not merely impersonal wisdom and energy - who possesses in infinite degree ability to think, to feel, to love, to rejoice, to suffer, to choose, to decide, to act, to take the initiative in helping human beings; and as the Creator he must be superior to creatures, therefore he must be beyond the noblest human being ever to live on earth, and consequently must be Christlike, Christlike plus.

This is a tremendous affirmation, and cannot be proved with the instruments of chemistry and physics. Our faith is that it can be validated in human experience. The foundation of all Christian belief is that human beings are more than mere animals, they are spirits also, spirits created in the image of the divine Spirit. Sharp distinction is made between the residence and the resident, between body and soul, between visible and invisible. All experience affirms that we are more than our bodies, more than the brute creation. We can detach ourselves from our physical habitations and send our thoughts and our affections around the earth. We can live in the past and we can project ourselves into the future. We are strangely moved by ideas and by ideals. Not much is required to make us laugh and to make us cry. We can live in extreme self-centeredness, and we are capable of the utmost sacrificial devotion to causes. We can ignore God, and with St. Augustine we can cry aloud, "O God, thou has made us for thyself and we can never rest until we rest in thee." The human body is a duplex apartment, housing an animal and a spirit bearing the imprint of God.

Think upon these words: "See what love the Father has given us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are...Beloved, we are God's children now; it does not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. And every one who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure." "You are the light of the world...Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven." "...walk as children of light (for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true), and try to learn what is pleasing to the Lord." (I John 3: 1-3; Matt. 5: 14, 16; Eph. 5: 8-10).

The Christian affirmation is even more sublime: God takes the initiative in revealing himself to men, to individuals one by one, because he loves us intimately and it is the nature of love to share. "If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good

things to those who ask him." Long ago Meister Eckhart exclaimed that God is a thousand times more eager to make himself known than we are willing to turn toward him, far more ready to enter than we are willing to open the door and bid him welcome.

There's a wideness in God's mercy,

Like the wideness of the sea;

There's a kindness in His justice

Which is more than liberty.

There is no place where earth's sorrows

Are more felt than up in heaven;

There is no place where earth's failings

Have such kindly judgment given.

For the love of God is broader

Than the measure of man's mind,

And the heart of the Eternal

Is most wonderfully kind.

(Frederick William Faber, 1814 - 1863)

It is the reality of human freedom and the immaturity of human life which prevent God from revealing himself more fully. The divine Kingdom of love cannot be peopled with robots and mechanical gadgets lacking power of affection. Life in God's home is not a matter of puppets jumping when he jerks the string. Because he loves us and yearns for our affection, he created us with power to love, he endowed us with freedom to choose and always he trusts us with the use of that ability. This liberty includes power to ignore God, to defy him and live in rebellion against him. We can close the windows and doors of our lives against him, barricade them, and refuse to make an effort to please him.

Gaze intently at this immortal picture: "Not many days later, the younger son gathered all he had and took his journey into a far country, and there he squandered his property in loose living...But when he came to himself he said... 'I will arise and go to my father...' And he arose and came to his father. But while he was yet at a distance, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him." (Luke 15: 13, 17, 18, 20)

Through desire we open our lives to God, for desire is a word which reveals the way we use our freedom. If we want God's help, he can with full respect for our freedom come to our aid. Some of God's blessings we enjoy whether or not we ask for them or are grateful for them. The sun shines and the rain falls upon good and bad alike. But the choicest of his gifts cannot be shared until human desire is turned Godward. Prayer is the soul's sincere desire, therefore prayers are high and low, strong and

weak according to what we want from God. When desire is low and powerful, God is denied opportunity. When desire is high and weak, his love finds only limited chance of expression. When high desire is dominant, God never misses an opportunity.

Thus it becomes clear that eager desire to know God's will is essential to understanding of what he wants us to do. The more eager we are, the more God has opportunity to reveal to us. The real test of eagerness to know is readiness to do, to walk in the light as it beams upon us. He that will do shall know is the word of Holy Scripture. We must hunger and thirst after righteousness if we are to find the purpose of God for our own lives. The way in which we use our freedom measures the blessing God is able to bestow upon us.

By low desire is meant wants that are self-centered, that reveal little concern for our fellows and only feeble aspiration to please God. Our animal nature has an ancient heritage and has been so well fed that it has outgrown the spirit that is within us. Our physical appetites are so keen that our tendency is to monopolize time seeking their satisfaction. The craving for food, enough of it and savory varieties of it, consumes much of all human energy. The hunger for sex satisfaction is persistent to the point of satiety. Deep is human longing to be noticed, to be in the center of the picture, to be applauded and honored with acclaim. Human lust for power is one of the mighty forces of the universe, to have dominion over others, to make decisions, to determine policies. Envy and jealousy are dynamic drives of human behavior. It is easy to covet what other men have, to be resentful because they have more than we have been able to obtain. Bitterness comes readily when another is given first billing and my name is relegated to small type or not mentioned at all. We are jealous of what we have and resent efforts to deprive us of our own.

And we live in a society that fertilizes self-centeredness and waters it plentifully. Self-interest is the driving motive of our economic activity, and we glory in individualism. We hope that it will be enlightened, but we want it to be individualism. Advertising is a persistent and inescapable stimulus to our longing for creature comforts and our craving for ostentation. Long ago Emerson reminded his generation that "things are in the saddle and ride men." What would he say after a thorough examination of the techniques of modern advertising!

To keep up with the Joneses, to win the applause that accompanies the first prize, to grasp power - all this consumes most of our energy and leaves only fragments of time for the higher pursuits of truth and the achievement of goodness. There is a Gresham's law in the realm of the spirit also. Just as counterfeit currency tends to drive sound money out of circulation, so the struggle for things and fame and power tends to obscure vision of the nobler purposes of life.

"Now the works of the flesh are plain: immorality, impurity, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, anger, selfishness, dissension, party strife, envy, drunkenness, carousing, and the like. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God." (Gal. 5: 19-21).

The good news is that desire can be changed. Low desire can be lifted and worthy desire that is weak can be strengthened. Desire for robust health may take precedence over the inclination to gorge oneself with rich and harmful food. The satisfactions of a happy home may prove to be more powerful than the craving for illicit relations. The joy of doing God's will may bring more exhilaration than yielding to self-centered impulses.

"...the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such there is no law. And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit." (Gal. 5: 22-25).

Vision of what we ought to be and what we can be possesses unlimited lifting power. Strange and mysterious is the spirit of man that he can be so mightily stirred by an ideal, so impelled to nobility of endeavor to reach an exalted goal, so sacrificial in nature that he will sell all that he has and buy the pearl of great price. Self-preservation is not the great law of life, rather self-commitment and devotion to a high and holy cause is the significant fact of human history. Mothers expend themselves for their children, true friends give their utmost, citizens in time of crisis count no cost too great for the preservation of high values. Human nature is potential, it can be molded, it is clay in the hands of the potter.

Man is so made that he can respond to challenge: "And he began to teach them that the Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. And he said this plainly...And he called to him the multitude with his disciples, and said unto them, 'If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it; and whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it. For what does it profit a man, to gain the whole world and forfeit his life?' (Mark 8: 31, 32, 34-36).

The prayer of confession changes what we want. When alertly aware of the presence of God, when contrast between the actual and the possible is vivid, when dissatisfaction with the present state of being is strong, the human soul cries aloud for forgiveness, for cleansing, for empowering. Reflection upon the contrast between animal-like existence and purposeful devotion to the common good of the family and

the community changes desire and deepens longing to make one's life really count. A sense of mission brings keener zest and increased energy.

Desire to know the will of God for our lives becomes more eager when we reflect upon his wisdom and love and majesty, infinitely beyond our powers of thought, so that the very "foolishness" of God is wiser than man's wisdom and his "feebleness" is mightier than human strength. What could be more exhilarating than to think God thoughts after him and to lay hold upon his illimitable power!

Intensity of desire to know what God wants us to do opens wide all our faculties to God and with our full consent enables him to quicken our thinking and arouse noble emotions and strengthen determination to live worthily. The search for God's purpose and will for our lives can become the most thrilling of all explorations. Our Lord reached the place where he could say "nevertheless," nevertheless not my will but thine be done, even though it led him to the cross of shame and pain. Our desires also can be changed to the degree that we want them to be changed. By clear thinking and quiet reflection we can be constantly aware of contrast between the flaming ideal of life as God would have us live and wallowing in the mire of physical appetite and self-centered ambition, between the habits of mere animals and the experience of holy communion with God and warm fellowship with people.

Give heed to this reminder:

Prayer is the soul's sincere desire,
Uttered or unexpressed;
The motion of a hidden fire,
That trembles in the breast.
Prayer is the burden of a sigh,
The falling of a tear;
The upward glancing of an eye,
When none but God is near...
Prayer is the contrite sinner's voice,
Returning from his ways;
While angels in their songs rejoice,
And cry, "Behold! He prays!"...
Nor prayer is made by man alone:
The Holy Spirit pleads;
And Jesus, on the eternal Throne,
For sinners intercedes.
O Thou by whom we come to God -
The Life, the Truth, the Way!
The path of prayer Thyself hast trod:
Lord, teach us how to pray!

(James Montgomery, 1771-1854)

Chapter 3

Saturate Your Mind With the Teaching and Example of Jesus

If you would know the desires and purposes of a man, concentrate your attention upon his traits of character, discover what kind of person he really is. His goal in life is derived from his attitudes and relationships. So it is with God. To know his will we must reflect upon his character. Since he is invisible and no man has ever seen God at any time, as we read in Holy Scripture, our judgment as to his nature must rest upon reason and observation. An inanimate object is less significant than a living being. Material energy is on a lower level than human thought. A watchmaker is greater than a watch, an astronomer is a higher creation than the starry firmament. Human beings vary in capacity of thought and in mastery of emotion and in discipline of will. The Supreme Being must be infinitely beyond human beings, the Creator must rank above the creation and all creatures.

The true nature of God cannot be apprehended directly by immature human minds, just as an infant in arms cannot know all the thoughts and aspirations of his mother. Human thought requires some idea of God if any attention is given to his existence and his characteristics. Innumerable indeed have been concepts of God, and varied in utmost degree have been ideas as to his character. No statement could be more distantly removed from truth than to say that all religions are the same. A man's religion is determined by what he thinks of God, and individuals hold contradicting convictions about the nature of the deity.

The human mind cannot escape the conclusion that if God exists he must be as good as the best person ever to live on earth. Men differ sharply about the qualities they conceive to be desirable in a person. The Christian faith is that in Jesus we see life in its highest and noblest manifestation. In his character and relationships, our Lord towers as the highest pinnacle of the range. It is the Christian conviction that he is unique and unapproached, and the New Testament writers use all the superlatives in portraying him. Reflect upon these estimates:

"For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life." "But God shows his love for us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us." "He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, will he not also give us

all things with him?" "In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be expiation for our sins." "In many and various ways God spoke of old to our fathers by the prophets; but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. He reflects the glory of God and bears the very stamp of his nature, upholding the universe by his word of power." "Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." "But there are also many other things which Jesus did; were every one of them to be written, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written." (John 3:16; Rom. 5:8, 8:32; 1 John 4:9, 10; Heb. 1:1-3; Phil. 2:9-11; John 21:25)

The Christian faith is that God is most completely revealed in Jesus, in his life, teaching, death upon the cross, resurrection, and living presence. Hence the conviction that the best of all ways of knowing the character of God is through the study of Jesus, through saturating oneself with the record of his doings and through reflection upon the significance of his life. This is what is meant when we speak of our Christlike God and our godlike Christ. The more fully we capture the spirit of Jesus, the more faithfully we walk in his way, the more God is able to make plain to us what his will is for our lives.

God was more real to Jesus than any human being was real, closer in thought and relationship than Peter and James and John, because Jesus wanted to do the will of God more than he wanted to do anything else in all life. This intensity of desire to please his Father enabled him to keep God in mind with more continuity and greater eagerness. Thus he traveled continuously in a redemptive circle: his overwhelming experience of companionship made more ardent his desire to do what was right in God's sight, and this comradeship brought keener zest to know and to do, which in turn made more glorious his communion with God.

Jesus practiced the presence of God until religion became the whole of his life, he loved God utterly and he shared himself completely with people. He thought about God frequently and spent much time in concentration upon God. He prayed short prayers often, and he prayed long prayers regularly. He got up a great while before day and went apart to pray, and sometimes he prayed all night long.

The practice of alternation was the source of Jesus' power; he alternated between intense activity in ministering to people and periods of withdrawal in solitude, silence and prayer. To his hours of reflection he brought the tragedies and sorrows of his countrymen, and to his days of toil he brought power from the hilltop. Concern made it easy for him to pray, and prayer deepened his solicitude.

The experiences of Jesus did not occur in a vacuum, and in order to understand him we must examine the circumstances of his life and reflect upon the alternatives before him. Why did he say this instead of that? Why did he choose to do this rather than that? This requires study, making use of historical data, careful and oft-repeated reading of the four Gospels and other interpretations by New Testament writers. In no other way can we gain such clear insight into the character of God and knowledge of his holy will for our lives.

We must never forget that Jesus was a member of a subject race, a people with an ancient past, with a deep conviction that the Jews had been chosen by the Eternal for a holy mission, and with passionate resentment against their bondage. They believed that the Ten Commandments were delivered to Moses straight from God and were sufficient and unchanging. They looked upon the law, with its countless oral interpretations, as the veritable Word of God, to be obeyed literally and without question. They acknowledged no rightful ruler except God himself. In order to keep their race pure and worthy to be God's messenger, they practiced segregation in extreme form, the record telling us that they had no dealings with the Samaritans.

They hated the Roman conquerors with unsurpassed fury. They had gained much experience in extreme forms of bitterness because they had been conquered and subjected to tyranny by the Egyptians, Babylonians, Assyrians, and

Persians. Sixty years before the birth of Jesus, after a century of independence under the Maceabees, Pompey captured Jerusalem and began Roman rule with the slaughter of 12,000 Jews before the sacred altar. From that hour until Jerusalem was utterly destroyed by Titus in A. D. 70, the land seethed with hatred and witnessed many armed rebellions. In Acts 5:36, 37 we read of Theudas and Judas who at different times led armed revolts. Luke 13:1 talks about "Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices." Mark 15:7 and Luke 23:19 inform us that Barabbas was a revolutionist. In Luke 6:15 we read of Simon the Zealot, who was at that time, or previously had been a member of an armed band of insurrectionists. The historian Josephus tells us that when Jesus was a small boy, Judas the Galilean led an armed attack upon Sepphoris the capital of Galilee, four miles across a narrow valley from the village of Nazareth. After bitter fighting the city was burned and many of its inhabitants were sold into slavery. Varus then pursued the rebels and outside Jerusalem crucified two thousand of them on two thousand crosses.

The burden of taxes imposed upon the Jewish people was crushing. Tax was piled high upon tax, customs upon customs, toll upon toll: land tax, cattle tax, income tax, poll tax, water tax, meat tax, salt tax, road tax, house tax, city tax, bridge and harbor tax, market tax, export duties, import duties. And in addition twelve kinds of religious taxes had to be paid. So the people staggered under total taxes which took thirty to forty percent of the national income. And this in an agricultural country where most of the peasants were poor.

Four proposed solutions were being offered by the Pharisees, the Sadducees, the Essenes and the Zealots: the way of obedience of the law, compromise with the Romans, escape to the desert, and armed rebellion against the conquerors. Sharper contrast can hardly be conceived than that between the ways of the Pharisees and the Romans. It was quite impossible for a devout Jew to be reconciled to pagan domination. Their very faith in God required an expectation of the imminent coming of the Messiah who would deliver them from bondage and restore their independence under divine rule.

All devout Jews were apocalyptists, they lived in the hope that deliverance would speedily come by the hand of God. The Zealots believed that God's redemptive act would be hastened by faithfulness demonstrated in armed revolution, while the Pharisees put their trust in obedience of the law as the way to win God's liberation.

All the days of Jesus upon earth were lived under these conditions of privation and conflict. As a result of his manner of life and the message he gave, Jesus came to be looked upon as a heretic, an agitator, and a traitor. He rejected the idea of salvation by obedience to ceremonialism and ritualism; he was opposed to racial segregation; and he refused to hate the Romans, to engage in plots for their overthrow and to take up arms against the invaders.

The record is full of evidence of the hostility of the Pharisees toward Jesus. They regarded him as a lawbreaker and a menace to sound faith. In the Old Testament eighteen different crimes are punishable by death, including work on the sabbath day and blasphemy. Jesus' conduct was such that the ecclesiastical leaders reached the conclusion that his death was required. The words of Exodus 31:14 are explicit: "You shall keep the sabbath, because it is holy for you; every one who profanes it shall be put to death; whoever does any work on it, that soul shall be cut off from among his people." And Leviticus 24:16 reads: "He who blasphemes the name of the Lord shall be put to death; all the congregation shall stone him; the sojourner as well as the native, when he blasphemes the Name, shall be put to death." In the days of Antiochus Epiphanes, a band of Jewish refugees permitted themselves and their families to be slaughtered rather than profane the sabbath by fighting on that day. The Pharisees were scandalized when they heard Jesus say: "The Son of man is Lord even of the sabbath," and "not what goes into the mouth defiles a man, but what comes out of the mouth, this defiles a man." There were convinced that Jesus was a dangerous heretic, too ominous a threat to the faith to be permitted to live.

"Now some of the scribes were sitting there, questioning in their hearts, 'Why does this man speak thus? It is blasphemy!' "And the scribes of the Pharisees, when they saw that he was eating with sinners and tax collectors, said to his disciples, 'Why does he eat and drink with tax collectors and

sinners?' "One sabbath he was going through the grainfields; and as they made their way his disciples began to pluck ears of grain. And the Pharisees said to him, 'Look, why are they doing what is not lawful on the sabbath?' "The Pharisees went out, and immediately held counsel with the Herodians against him, how to destroy him." (Mark 2:6, 7, 23, 23; 3:6)

One of the continuing temptations that came into Jesus' mind was that he should use unworthy means in seeking glorious ends. Surely it must be the will of God that the tyranny of Rome be ended! In Jesus' childhood he must have listened to the old men of the community reciting their experiences in the days of liberty under the Maccabees. The exploits of David and Solomon were familiar to Jesus, and like all devout Jews he must have reflected upon the restoration of the ancient glories of Israel. For years he listened to the fervent appeals of Zealots to join them and to depend upon God to use their armed violence in driving out the hated conquerors and thus restore freedom to the land. The faith of Jesus surpassed even that of Judas Maccabeus when he cried out: "Do not be afraid of their numbers, and do not fear their charge. Remember how our forefathers were saved at the Red Sea, when Pharaoh pursued them with an armed force. So now let us cry to heaven, if perhaps he will accept us and remember his agreement with our forefathers, and crush this camp before us today. Then all the heathen will know that there is one who ransoms and preserves Israel."

No wonder that Jesus prayed all night! No wonder that he got up a great while before day! He had much to pray about. The tragedies of his people hung as a millstone about his neck. Everywhere he observed the evil effects of alien oppression. He was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. Anguish of soul he knew, and tears flowed from his eyes for the people of Jerusalem.

When Jesus went away to pray, he always carried something with him, and when he came back he brought something along. He carried the burdens of his people, and he brought with him knowledge of the way to lift these burdens, and power from God which flowed through him into stricken lives. From his Father he received this word: live today as a good member of the divine family; love God with your entire being, love your neighbor as yourself, and love your enemies also. Forgive until the end of time. Live today with kindness,

compassion, mercy. Resist evil by doing good. Run the risks of doing right, and take the consequences. Seek to know God's will, endeavor to do it, leave the results in his hands. Do not lose your life by seeking it; save it by throwing it away in faithful comradeship with God. Seek first and all the time the Kingdom of God, and he will have opportunity to bestow his richest blessings upon you.

Much of this was interpreted by men of tradition and privilege and power as heresy, subversiveness and treason. In the end they nailed him to a tree as the archenemy of the community. But Jesus kept his face steadfast toward Jerusalem, his heart determined to do the will of God, and his trust resolute in the wisdom and love and power of his Father. Thus there dwelt for awhile upon this earth one who lived for God, who submerged himself in the sins and sorrows of his people, who trusted in the power of right attitudes and right relationships, who did the will of his Father at any cost, with the knowledge that when a seed of corn is buried in the earth, it sprouts, grows and brings forth full grain in the ear.

Beyond all comparison, Jesus reveals the character of God and helps us to know the holy purpose of God for the individual and for society. If you would know what to do in a particular situation, act in the spirit of Jesus, take seriously his word of counsel, move forward along the path he traveled. Keep asking, "What does Jesus want me to do about this?" This will not give you an infallible answer or freedom from error in decision. But nothing else you can do will bring such clarity of insight into the desires of God for your own life as earnest commitment to Jesus, continuous study of his way, and persistent loyalty to him. Many other roads toward the will of God you should explore, but never forget that Jesus is the broad and direct line of communication with the Eternal.

Strong Son of God, immortal Love,

Whom we, that have not seen thy face,

By faith, and faith alone, embrace,

Believing where we cannot prove...

Thou seemest human and divine,

The highest, holiest manhood, thou.

Our wills are ours, we know not how;
Our wills are ours, to make them thine.

Our little systems have their day;
They have their day and cease to be;
They are but broken lights of thee,
And thou, O Lord, are more than they.

Let knowledge grow from more to more,
But more reverence in us dwell;
That mind and soul, according well,
May make one music as before,

But vaster. We are fools and slight;
We mock thee when we do not fear;
But help thy foolish ones to bear;
Help thy vain worlds to bear thy light.

(Alfred Tennyson, 1809-1892)

Chapter 4

EXPOSE YOUR SPIRIT TO GOD

For two primary reasons God is unable fully to disclose his purpose and will to us: the reality of human freedom, and the degree of our spiritual immaturity. God is a loving Father, not an arbitrary dictator. He endowed us with all the faculties required for entrance into the divine kingdom of fellowship, and bestowed upon us liberty to make use of the equipment thus provided. Always he trusts us with the power of decision. We can turn toward him or we can turn away from him. We can seek his help or we can live in rebellion against him. And just as a human mother can share only a small proportion of her aspirations and desires with an infant in arms, so God is unable to make clear the full glory of his purpose to groping, weak and sinful spiritual infants.

The record reminds us that Jesus grew, he increased in wisdom and in stature, and in favor with God and men. We also must move from infancy and childhood to youth and adulthood in the world of the spirit. Just as we nourish our physical bodies, so we must nurture our mind and emotions and will. In the realm of the spirit also we require sunshine and fresh air, bread and milk, sufficient vitamins and adequate exercise, alternation from activity to repose to activity.

Human freedom can be used in ways that provide God with opportunity. We can open the windows of our lives momentarily, and we can keep them open for an unhurried expose of ourselves to God. Not that God needs extra time in examining us for our Christian faith is that he knows all our thoughts before ever we put them into words. The value of a time exposure is not that God is changed thereby, but in the change in us which occurs when voluntarily we wait before him. Snapshots and time exposures are both essential. We need to turn consciously toward God many times during the day, and we need an unhurried period daily for concentrated attention to the things of God.

Reminders of God are everywhere visible. We can cultivate the habit of recognizing his handiwork in the beauty and majesty of nature. In

the marvelous blending of colors at sunrise and sunset;
the mystery and fascination of the starry firmament on a dark night;
white clouds drifting leisurely through the blue heavens;
a vase filled with white and red roses;
a pine tree, and a spruce and a maple;
a blue lake trimmed in green;
the majestic flow of the Mississippi and the Ohio and the Columbia;
The tinkling music of a mountain torrent;

the roar of breakers on the rocks;
the patter of life-bringing rain on the roof;
the miracle of spring;
the glory of the autumn harvest;
the symmetry and uniqueness of every flake of snow.

He that hath eyes, let him see, recognize, appreciate, and be thankful. Gratitude mellows our spirit and provides God with opportunity. Enter into the experience of the poet:

For I have learned

To look on Nature, not as in the hour
Of thoughtless youth; but hearing oftentimes
The still, sad music of humanity,
Nor harsh nor grating, though of ample power
to chasten and subdue. And I have felt
A presence that disturbs me with the joy
Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime,
Of something far more deeply interfused,
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
And the round ocean and the living air,
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man;
A motion and a spirit, that impels
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
And rolls through all things. Therefore am I still
A lover of the meadows and the woods,
And mountains; and of all that we behold
From this green earth; of all the mighty world
Of eye and ears, - both what they half create,
And what perceive; well pleased to recognize
In nature and the language of the sense,
The anchor of my purest thoughts, the nurse,
The guide, the guardian of my heart, and soul,
Of all my moral being.

(William Wordsworth, 1770-1850)

Behold the work of the Creator in living creatures. In

the miniature perfection of a hummingbird;
the lovely song of a mockingbird;
the unerring instinct of the migratory Arctic tern;
the faithful affection of a dog;
the childlike playfulness of kittens;
the responsiveness of a horse.

While remembering that the eye of God is on the sparrow, realize that his concern for you individually is unbounded. You are of worth far beyond that of a sparrow or a dog.

It is not an accident that religious conference grounds and institute sites are beautiful places, where for a day or a week the human soul is exposed to God's beauty, and the solitary individual enters into transforming fellowship. The awareness of beauty and the experience of comradeship work wonders in the human spirit. Therefore, be alert to the revelations of God in nature, go often to lovely spots where Mother Nature will soothe your tired spirit and unfold before you the glories of God. Recline beneath the arched roof of green tracery. Toss pebbles into still water and reflect

weak according to what we want from God. When desire is low and powerful, God is denied opportunity. When desire is high and weak, his love finds only limited chance of expression. When high desire is dominant, God never misses an opportunity.

Thus it becomes clear that eager desire to know God's will is essential to understanding of what he wants us to do. The more eager we are, the more God has opportunity to reveal to us. The real test of eagerness to know is readiness to do, to walk in the light as it beams upon us. He that will do shall know is the word of Holy Scripture. We must hunger and thirst after righteousness if we are to find the purpose of God for our own lives. The way in which we use our freedom measures the blessing God is able to bestow upon us.

By low desire is meant wants that are self-centered, that reveal little concern for our fellows and only feeble aspiration to please God. Our animal nature has an ancient heritage and has been so well fed that it has outgrown the spirit that is within us. Our physical appetites are so keen that our tendency is to monopolize time seeking their satisfaction. The craving for food, enough of it and savory varieties of it, consumes much of all human energy. The hunger for sex satisfaction is persistent to the point of satiety. Deep is human longing to be noticed, to be in the center of the picture, to be applauded and honored with acclaim. Human lust for power is one of the mighty forces of the universe, to have dominion over others, to make decisions, to determine policies. Envy and jealousy are dynamic drives of human behavior. It is easy to covet what other men have, to be resentful because they have more than we have been able to obtain. Bitterness comes readily when another is given first billing and my name is relegated to small type or not mentioned at all. We are jealous of what we have and resent efforts to deprive us of our own.

And we live in a society that fertilizes self-centeredness and waters it plentifully. Self-interest is the driving motive of our economic activity, and we glory in individualism. We hope that it will be enlightened, but we want it to be individualism. Advertising is a persistent and inescapable stimulus to our longing for creature comforts and our craving for ostentation. Long ago Emerson reminded his generation that "things are in the saddle and ride men." What would he say after a thorough examination of the techniques of modern advertising!

To keep up with the Joneses, to win the applause that accompanies the first prize, to grasp power - all this consumes most of our energy and leaves only fragments of time for the higher pursuits of truth and the achievement of goodness. There is a Gresham's law in the realm of the spirit also. Just as counterfeit currency tends to drive sound money out of circulation, so the struggle for things and fame and power tends to obscure vision of the nobler purposes of life.

"Now the works of the flesh are plain: immorality, impurity, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, anger, selfishness, dissension, party strife, envy, drunkenness, carousing, and the like. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God." (Gal. 5: 19-21).

The good news is that desire can be changed. Low desire can be lifted and worthy desire that is weak can be strengthened. Desire for robust health may take precedence over the inclination to gorge oneself with rich and harmful food. The satisfactions of a happy home may prove to be more powerful than the craving for illicit relations. The joy of doing God's will may bring more exhilaration than yielding to self-centered impulses.

"...the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such there is no law. And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit." (Gal. 5: 22-25).

Vision of what we ought to be and what we can be possesses unlimited lifting power. Strange and mysterious is the spirit of man that he can be so mightily stirred by an ideal, so impelled to nobility of endeavor to reach an exalted goal, so sacrificial in nature that he will sell all that he has and buy the pearl of great price. Self-preservation is not the great law of life, rather self-commitment and devotion to a high and holy cause is the significant fact of human history. Mothers expend themselves for their children, true friends give their utmost, citizens in time of crisis count no cost too great for the preservation of high values. Human nature is potential, it can be molded, it is clay in the hands of the potter.

Man is so made that he can respond to challenge: "And he began to teach them that the Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. And he said this plainly...And he called to him the multitude with his disciples, and said unto them, 'If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it; and whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it. For what does it profit a man, to gain the whole world and forfeit his life?' (Mark 8: 31, 32, 34-36).

The prayer of confession changes what we want. When alertly aware of the presence of God, when contrast between the actual and the possible is vivid, when dissatisfaction with the present state of being is strong, the human soul cries aloud for forgiveness, for cleansing, for empowering. Reflection upon the contrast between animal-like existence and purposeful devotion to the common good of the family and

the community changes desire and deepens longing to make one's life really count. A sense of mission brings keener zest and increased energy.

Desire to know the will of God for our lives becomes more eager when we reflect upon his wisdom and love and majesty, infinitely beyond our powers of thought, so that the very "foolishness" of God is wiser than man's wisdom and his "feebleness" is mightier than human strength. What could be more exhilarating than to think God thoughts after him and to lay hold upon his illimitable power!

Intensity of desire to know what God wants us to do opens wide all our faculties to God and with our full consent enables him to quicken our thinking and arouse noble emotions and strengthen determination to live worthily. The search for God's purpose and will for our lives can become the most thrilling of all explorations. Our Lord reached the place where he could say "nevertheless," nevertheless not my will but thine be done, even though it led him to the cross of shame and pain. Our desires also can be changed to the degree that we want them to be changed. By clear thinking and quiet reflection we can be constantly aware of contrast between the flaming ideal of life as God would have us live and wallowing in the mire of physical appetite and self-centered ambition, between the habits of mere animals and the experience of holy communion with God and warm fellowship with people.

Give heed to this reminder:

Prayer is the soul's sincere desire,
Uttered or unexpressed;
The motion of a hidden fire,
That trembles in the breast.
Prayer is the burden of a sigh,
The falling of a tear;
The upward glancing of an eye,
When none but God is near...
Prayer is the contrite sinner's voice,
Returning from his ways;
While angels in their songs rejoice,
And cry, "Behold! He prays!"...
Nor prayer is made by man alone:
The Holy Spirit pleads;
And Jesus, on the eternal Throne,
For sinners intercedes.
O Thou by whom we come to God -
The Life, the Truth, the Way!
The path of prayer Thyself hast trod:
Lord, teach us how to pray!

(James Montgomery, 1771-1854)

RELATE YOURSELF TO A SHARING GROUP

We cannot solve our own problems in isolation, and other people need our help in facing their situations. Individuals by themselves cannot hope to find the will of God in any completeness, or be able to gain sufficient spiritual power. We are so constituted and the society in which we live is so complex that we must help one another.

We have much to learn from Alcoholics Anonymous. Its members have found that they must have help if they are to keep from drinking. To their sorrow they have discovered that single-handed they do not possess sufficient will power to resist the smell of liquor, or to turn from it when subjected to the appeal of social drinking. They cannot escape drunkenness until they admit that by themselves they cannot break the vicious habit, even though they long to do so and have repeatedly made earnest resolutions to remain sober. Not even awareness of the wreckage which accompanies intoxication can stop them, until they cry aloud for help. More than penitence is required, humility is essential. So they have learned to lean on one another, to summon aid in the hour of danger, to avoid temptation by regular periods of fellowship. They feel free to make a telephone call at any hour of the day or night when they find themselves in the grip of powerful impulse to take a drink. They develop the practice of continued confession that alone they are helpless. They feel the need for "some force outside themselves working for righteousness." And often a member with his new found sense of interdependence discovers God or recovers the faith he once held. The cure for drunkenness is acute sense of need, confession, mutual aid, fellowship and communion with God.

Many a home would be saved from wreckage if husband and wife would admit their need of outside help and turn somewhere for assistance. Sometimes they wait too long and go to a lawyer for legal advice. Every minister knows the tragic plight of numerous homes. The stress and strain of life produces irritability. Petty squabbles turn into serious quarrels. Love cools and is replaced by resentment. Often money matters cause controversy, and loss of self-control. The home becomes an unhappy place, the husband turns to drink or to some other woman for companionship and sex satisfaction. Perhaps the wife in her loneliness and resentment likewise looks around for someone to whom she can give herself completely. Triangles often are the prelude to the divorce court.

In the home as in the field of medicine, prevention is better than cure. Married couples need fellowship. Social hours with other couples are not sufficient. Play-

ing games and being entertained are inadequate. Husband and wife need times of heart-felt sharing with other couples, hours when they stop posing and pretending, periods when they unburden themselves freely and discuss intimate questions. Like Alcoholics Anonymous, they must be willing to admit their need of mutual aid, be ready to confess freely, exchange experiences, and together seek answers and the power so urgently needed. When they see a crisis arising in the home, without delay they must turn to friends for help. Couples must develop a sense of responsibility for the welfare and happiness of other husbands and wives, and must be willing to take the initiative in offering assistance. This can be done without resentment if the experience of fellowship has been previously established.

One of the most important of all functions of the church is to bind its members together in circles of fellowship, small in size and meeting regularly in various homes for serious conversation and earnest prayer. Every prayer group should also be a conversation center, where the important problems of members are examined in the spirit of concern and considerateness, and where a common search is made for solutions. Mutual intercession binds individuals together and deepens awareness of mutual needs. Our minds become exhilarated at the thought of what would happen if every couple in the church entered regularly into the experience of fellowship in a sharing group, where they could talk frankly, profit by group experience, pray together with fervor, and assume mutual responsibility for one another.

(Numerous illustrations of actual transformations wrought in group fellowship are needed at this point. Please write paragraphs to be inserted.)

Not alone in the field of domestic relations is fellowship so invaluable, in many other areas also is the need urgent. Consider a neighborhood situation where a Negro family has moved into a Caucasian community where race feeling is strong. A sharing group is needed to engage in prayerful conversation about the problem arising from tradition and passion. It is not sufficient to have a discussion in a secular atmosphere. The will of God must be sought and the spirit of our Lord captured. Members of the group should keep asking themselves, What is right in God's sight? What does our Lord want us to do? Couples should seek opportunity to talk in friendly fashion with irate neighbors, help them to understand the meaning of American democracy and interpret to them the significance of the Christian way of dealing with the situation. Cordial visits should be made to the Negro home, and an invitation extended to enter a sharing group. The Negro family should be quietly and warmly received into the life of the church and the community.

A problem requiring the attention of a sharing group is the widely prevalent

practice on the part of realtors of refusing to rent or to sell property to members of minority groups. The Supreme Court has made it impossible to enforce restrictive covenants by legal means, but they are still being enforced in many places by public opinion and by concerted action on the part of property owners. In the inner circle of fellowship, this situation should be faced and a common search made for the will of God and for right forms of action. Friendly calls should be made upon real estate brokers and the problem discussed in cordial fashion. Prayerful intercession should be made for realtors and for families attempting to perpetuate residential segregation.

Numerous civic problems should be considered by sharing groups. Public school questions, juvenile delinquency, dealing with offenders, corruption in politics, candidates for public office, and numerous matters of public policy should be the subjects of prayerful conversation, with eager desire to know what God wants done and with common yearning for power to do right. Foreign policy should be brought into the heart of prayerful conversation. Without heat, controversial questions should be examined with desire for illumination. The draft of young men and the hydrogen bomb should be faced in the spirit of Christ. Members should counsel together about more effective action on the part of citizens.

Business men and their wives should share together problems arising in economic and professional life. The sense of insecurity, the terrific strain of the competitive struggle, the low moral tone of the community should be faced with utmost frankness, and counsel taken as to right ways of living under all the circumstances. Christian employers and workers should meet together in small sharing groups for an examination of mutual problems, the pooling of experiences, and in earnest prayer for God's guidance.

Fellowship is a great solvent of human problems. The meaning of life is found in relationships. The human spirit in isolation is miserable. The sense of loneliness is one of the most awful of all experiences. We are made for one another, to live in families, and to find satisfaction in groups. Thus we cannot expect to find the will of God by ourselves, apart from our fellows. True enough we are individuals, and one by one come under the eyes of God, and must individually give an account of ourselves. We are not mere atoms in a mob or spokes in the gigantic wheel of state. We are not just one out of a hundred or a hundred million, we are solitary lost sheep for whom the Shepherd seeks until he finds. Each one is a prodigal for whom our Father waits.

Salvation is individual, and salvation is also social. We cannot be redeemed in

isolation. No man lives to himself, no man dies to himself, and no man can be saved by himself. No man reaps all that he sows, and only that which comes from the seed he cast into the earth. We sow and we reap is the law of life. We are bound together indissolubly and are members one of another. "For as in one body we have many members, and all the members do not have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another." (Rom. 12:5) We are members of the family of God, and are our brother's keeper, and he is our keeper. Full of mystery is the way way we influence one another. We help each other and we harm each other.

"When a group of people is sitting together in silence, with their minds fixed in ardent aspiration upon the fulfilment of such a petition as 'Hallowed by Thy name,' a very deep joint experience of God comes to them...In the silent prayer of such a group, prolonged perhaps for half an hour or more, it is almost possible to feel the beat of the Divine power going forth through us to the meeting of the world's need. The miracle is realized that although individually we are so trivial, yet in a group, and with God, there comes into play forces for love and peace which may be wholly intangible and non-measurable, but are in a real sense undefeatable and immortal." (John S. Hoyland, Prayer and the Social Revolution. Published by the Student Christian Movement Press, London).

The need for sharing groups has long been recognized. Our Lord selected twelve apostles and bound them together in sacred experiences of fellowship and comradeship in a holy cause. The early church began in homes. On the day of Pentecost the disciples received power as they were gathered in an upper room of fellowship. "And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers." And fellowship!

Much is to be learned from the experience of the early Christians in conquering fear. They belonged to a persecuted minority group and were the objects of derision and physical violence. Often they were at the point of death, and many met the fate of martyrs. Such men wrote the New Testament. It is a book of much trouble, but part of its significance is found in the record of holy joy experienced in the midst of terrible persecution. One of its keynotes is found in the exclamation: "Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say Rejoice. Let all men know your forbearance. The Lord is at hand. Have no anxiety about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." (Phil. 4:4-7) To an amazing degree these Christians conquered fear -

fear of privation, fear of failure, fear of enemies, fear of death. The warmth of their fellowship deepened awareness of the presence of their living Lord, made more vital their worship of the living God, and thus brought resources of faith and courage and perseverance.

In unbroken line through the ages stream life-bringing fellowship groups:

Jesus and his friends on the Mount of Transfiguration;
Paul and Barnabas and Silas surrounded by consecrated companies;
Bernard of Clairvaux and his twenty-nine companions;
Francis of Assisi and his little brown brothers;
Meister Eckhart and the Friends of God;
Jan Ruysbroeck and the Brethren of the Common Life;
George Fox and his comrades who discovered the Inner Light;
John Wesley and his lay preachers;
John Woolman and the members of the Mount Holly Friends Meeting.
William Booth and his Salvation Army lads and lassies.
Dwight L. Moody and his Northfield students.
John R. Mott and the secretaries of the Student Volunteer Movement.
Walter Rauschenbusch and the Brotherhood of the Kingdom.
Muriel Lester and the Brethren of the Common Table.

We also may be part of a power-enduing group. Buried within each soul are vast potential resources of goodness and sacrificial devotion to the cause of human well-being. An Inner Light burns within and can be fanned into flame by fellowship and communion. This invisible world of reality, this meeting place of God and man, this rendezvous of human spirit with human spirit, is the source of illumination and power so desperately needed in our time. The miracle of fellowship has wrought many a wonder in ages past, and can do its mighty work within us individually and within our society.

The church should put forth utmost endeavor to relate every member to a sharing group, where all kinds and varieties of problems can be faced in the atmosphere of mutual concern, mutual search, and mutual commitment.

Join now in an affirmation which has come from many hearts and which has often been repeated in unison in services of worship:

Through the long centuries of human history there has been building a Beloved Community in which all souls that love, all souls that aspire, are bound together in one life.

Precious unto us are the men of the spirit of Jesus, who in every age and in

every clime, have endured all things that they might bear testimony to that truth which is powerful unto the salvation of the world.

Precious unto us is the memory of the unnumbered millions who, humble and nameless, the straight hard pathway have trod.

Precious unto us is the memory of earth's lowly who have added, each in his measure, to the ever-growing treasure of the common life of man.

All these have not lived in vain.

They have put on immortality in the life of the Kingdom of Heaven.

All these are not dead.

They have joined the Choir Invisible whose music is the gladness of the world.

Still does the Spirit of Jesus speed on its conquering way.

Still do the prophets and martyrs inspire men to heroism and self-sacrifice in the service of life.

Still do our own beloved dead live again in minds made better for their presence.

We too are members of the Beloved Community. A thousand unseen ties bind us in one living body apart from which there is no life.

We are joined in one communion of love and aspiration with all mankind, living and dead.

We too have our gifts to bring to the altar of Humanity - gifts of love, of wisdom, of consecration.

We too would make our contribution to the unborn future, and find immortality in the radiant life of the Kingdom of God.

We are strong with the strength of all mankind; the courage of Humanity's burden bearers of all the years descends upon us.

We are thine, O Kingdom of God! Take us, use us! Let our whole lives be an offering laid on thy living altar.

REMOVE BARRIERS TO GOD'S RESOURCES

God never misses an opportunity. When he is welcomed, he always comes in. Never does he withhold guidance and power. His wisdom is so high, his love is so unbounded, and his power is so mighty that he avails himself of every opportunity to enrich the life of every person on this wide earth. God can be depended upon. Ever can he be trusted.

Human freedom may open doors for God, and human freedom may place barriers in his way. When we keep the door closed through indifference to his presence, through thoughtless neglect, through deliberate defiance of his holy will, God is denied opportunity. With alert and ardent desire we must seek his help if he, with full respect for our power of choice, is to be enabled to give us clearest guidance and greatest power.

A man may place barriers before his own life, and also he may barricade another life against God. A husband's attitudes and manner of life may make it difficult for God to have full access to the faculties of his wife. His indifference to God may prevent power-bringing family prayers. His disbelief may withhold from children illuminating religious instruction in the home. His loose habits may become a serious detriment to the formation of right habits on the part of his wife and children. His power of choice includes liberty to seduce and debase other lives. The devastation which follows in the train of his sinning is not confined to this day and to those near at hand, but extends far and wide and to children's children to the fourth generation.

Human freedom is glorious and it is awful. We are able to provide God with opportunity. We may be used in enriching other lives, and we may become a terrible curse to many. From our lives may grow an abundant harvest of good, and from the seed we sow may come much evil.

Self-centeredness is the highest of all obstacles in God's way.

When desire is concentrated on self:

We exhaust ourselves in getting what we want when we want it;

The love of money grips us;

We use other people as means to our own enjoyment;

Just tends to drive out love;

We blur distinctions between truth and falsehood;

We grow careless about the difference between right and wrong;

We become proud and arrogant and complacent;

Envy and jealousy become cankerous sores in our characters;

We find ready alibies for callousness and cruelty;

We easily resort to the excuse - human nature being what it is;

We smile away our sins with the exclamation: I know that I am no angel!

Before we can provide God with full access to our lives, we must be possessed by the realization that sin is no laughing matter, some trivial falling short of perfection. Self-centeredness, with all its evil progeny, is a barricade against God. Our Lord drove home this truth: "For whoever would save his life will lose it...Take heed, and beware of all covetousness; for a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions...But I say to you that every one who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart. If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and throw it away...You cannot serve God and mammon...for the gate is wide and the way is easy, that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many." (Mark 8:35; Luke 12:15; Mt. 5:28, 29; 6:24; 7:13).

Reflect upon these startling words of William Law: "Repentance is but a kind of table-talk, till we see so much of the deformity of our inward nature as to be in some degree frightened and terrified at the sight of it. There must be some kind of an earthquake within us, something that must rend and shake us to the bottom, before we can be enough sensible either of the state of death we are in or enough desirous of that Saviour, who alone can raise us from it...If we used but half the pains to find out the evil that is hidden in us, as we do to hide the appearance of it from others, we should soon find that in the midst of our most orderly life we are in death, and want a Saviour to make our most apparent virtues to be virtuous. It is, therefore, exceeding good and beneficial to us to discover this dark, disordered fire of our soul."

We must learn to pray such a prayer as this:

God strengthen me to bear myself;
That heaviest weight of all to bear;
Inalienable weight of care...
God harden me against myself,
This coward with pathetic voice
Who craves for ease, and rest, and joys;
Myself, arch-traitor to myself;
My hollowest friend, my deadliest foe,
My clog whatever road I go,
Yet One there is can curb myself,
Can roll the strangling load from me,
Break off the yoke and set me free.

(Christiana G. Rossetti, 1830 - 1894)

Until we become truly penitent and resolutely determined to bring forth fruits of penitence, God is barred from doing his loving will in our lives. "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourself, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins,

he is faithful and just, and will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us."

(I John 1:8-10)

One of the highest barriers before God is human indifference and inertia, sins of omission. We may act as if we believe God to be unimportant to our lives, or at least not worth bothering with. We may let days and months go by without conscious desire for his guidance and power. Or at most we may bestow upon God only a passing thought now and then. In certain moments we may intend to open our lives to our heavenly Father, and never get around to doing anything about this impulse. We may take the treasure of our lives and bury it in the ground, instead of using it in God's service. We may become so preoccupied with our bodily appetites that we give scarcely a thought to the nurture of our souls.

Not only unrepentant wrongdoing,
Ignorance, dullness, moral blindness, stand in God's way;
Sloth and inertia, feebleness of effort, lukewarmness,
Timidity and cowardice,
Dull our minds and smother our spirits, and
Cause us to call evil good, and good evil,
Make us unable to tell right from wrong, and
Turn our very lights into darkness,
So that we conform to this world,
Do as the Romans do,
Follow the crowd down the broad road to destruction.

Be appalled, O heavens, at this,
be shocked, be utterly desolate,
says the Lord,
for my people have committed two evils:
they have forsaken me,
the fountain of living waters,
and hewed out cisterns for themselves,
broken cisterns,
that can hold no water.
(Jeremiah 2:12, 13)

Woe to those who call evil good
and good evil,
who put darkness for light
and light for darkness,
who put bitter for sweet
and sweet for bitter!
Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes,
and shrewd in their own sight!...
Therefore, as the tongue of fire devours the stubble,
and as dry grass sinks down in the flame,
so their root will be as rottenness,
and their blossom will go up like dust;
for they have rejected the law of the Lord of hosts,
and have despised the word of the Holy One of Israel...
Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot
save,

or his ear dull, that it cannot hear;
but your iniquities have made a separation
between you and God,
and your sins have hid his face from you...
(Isaiah 5:20-24; 59:1,2)

Before God can make plain to us the right thing to do, we must stop wrongdoing, both the sins we commit and the evil we do through refusal to walk in the light we have already been given. We are caught on the horns of the dilemma - our sins prevent God from doing all that he desires to do for us, yet we cannot turn from our sins without God's help. What we can do is to repent and cultivate desire to know what is right, be alert and diligent in effort to do what is pleasing to God, ardently seek his help, and walk step by step in the light as it is given.

Let us pray:

In paralyzing weakness
In shame and inefficiency and sloth,
In deepest self-disgust,
We come to Thee, Thou God of beauty and of truth:

Grant us Thy cleansing power this day:

Breathe through our grossness
The Spirit of Thy purity:

Breathe through our meanness
The Spirit of Thy generous self-giving:

Breathe through our falsehood
The Spirit of Thy bright sincerity:

Breathe through our ugliness of soul
The Spirit of Thy deathless beauty:

Rejuvenate, Thou God of youth,
Illuminate, Thou God of Light,
Restore, Thou God who makest all things new,
Revive, Thou God of Life eternal:

Thou God of Love, dear Father-God,
Fill us this day with love for Thee Thyself,
With love for all the souls that Thou hast made.
(John S. Hoyland)

(John S. Hoyland, God in the Commonplace. Published
by the Student Christian Movement, London)